YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota

Meeting Minutes – March 24, 2006
Tele-Conference Call

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD, Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Steve Story, Stillwater CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND.CD, and John Moorhouse RAC Chair.

Others Present: Robert Lubbers, YRCF; Warren Kellogg, TAC/NRCS; Jim Robinson, DNRC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Susan Gilbertz, TAC/MSU-B: Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Kelly Gilbertson, YRCDC Project Assistant, and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Paul Gilbert called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm March 24, 2006.

Paul explained that the reason for the conference call was to approve the GIS work order for Jim Robinson in addition to approving the fact sheet, the RAC charter and the standing rules. There is also other business to attend to on the agenda.

Jim Robinson had turned in a work order for GIS services from DTM earlier, and today he submitted a letter of explanation. (see attachment). This work order amounts to approximately $10,500.00 for data set analysis and will be funded by the 2005 RDGP grant. A report will be generated containing tables and GIS data files. It will be available through the Council and on the web-site. This work order was approved by consensus vote on the condition that the grant agreement for RDGP 2005 is signed.

The fact sheet was discussed next. Phil Fox had a few minor details that he will discuss with Dave Schwarz.

The RAC charter was reviewed and Laurie Zeller commented that the RAC should have approval of the Council before they go on infield inspections. Under meeting management annual elections will be changed to biennial. It was noted that the Council does appoint the TAC Chairman. The counties need to be put in order and be the correct ones.

The Standing rules will reflect that the mileage will be paid according to the state rate. Approval was granted by consensus vote on the Fact Sheet, RAC charter and Standing Rules with the corrections made.

Dave Schwarz spoke next about funding efforts saying he had met with Dr. McGinnis. It was decided that the best option was to go for a one time ear mark of one million dollars. Liz Ching agreed with this. Dave drafted a letter with this request, Laurie Zeller added to it and Kelly Gilbertson finalized the changes. Paul Gilbert and LaVerne Ivie met with the Congressional staff and hand delivered the letter. Dave Schwarz will follow up on it in three weeks. The commitment from the regional COE is good, the federal is not.

John Tubbs, DNRC, may also write a letter regarding DNRC's concern about the federal match promised and not delivered. Laurie Zeller asked if North Dakota had been contacted, and Orvin Finsaas said he had written letters to his Congressmen and the Governor.

Dave Schwarz was not able to contact the Beartooth RC&D, but he was able to speak with Mike Carlson of Eastern Plains RC&D. Mike said they may have a small amount of money available for administrative purposes. Dave Schwarz also plans to write letters to the Fortune 500 companies to see if they may be willing to help fund the Yellowstone River study. Gay Easton said Chris Mehus is a new member on the Beartooth RC&D, and he will be a good contact for us.

There has been no word from Greg Johnson. Warren requested the Council contact him and stress communication is necessary.

The annual report has not been finished. Kelly Gilbertson is awaiting comments from Laurie Zeller.

Warren Kellogg reported that the landowner meeting to form the landowner contact information had gone very well. There is still a little work to be done, but soon the lists will be in order for the studies to begin this spring.

The COE is contracting with Susan Gilbertz on the socio-economic scope of work and Andy Hansen, MSU-Bozeman for the avian study. Susan said the signers are willing to sign, but the agreements have not been written yet.

Warren said pass-through line items would be discussed at the April meeting as well as purchases.

Dave Schwarz said Buffalo Rapids has done extensive irrigation water conservation work with the EQIP contracts. Jim Bauder is writing a grant for a study that will provide best management practices for irrigators in the Yellowstone Basin. He asked for permission to write a letter of support for the grant. Approval to write the letter was given by consensus vote.

Paul Gilbert led a discussion about a letter from the Governor requesting the Council appoint a member to work with his office in developing a set of best management practices for the rivers and streams of Montana. Don Youngbauer was appointed to do this, and it was suggested that he ask a RAC member to serve as an alternate. This action was approved by consensus vote.

Carol submitted a financial report which was approved and filed for audit. The minutes were approved in a motion by John Moorhouse, seconded by Don Youngbauer and passed by voice vote.

The next meeting will be April 20, 2006 at noon. The agenda will contain reports and a continuation of funding efforts.

Paul Gilbert commented that Dave Schwarz was making a very smooth transition into the Coordinator's position and that he had done a lot of work. The Council expressed their appreciation.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Watts

Jim Robinson letter:

In general this work order is intended to document historical change in the river's planform features; in other words: identify channel segments of interest regarding channel type conversion (via human and natural means) and degree of lateral channel migration, and to help target future data collection efforts. Specific rationale for individual tasks as follows:

1. **Integrate Upper Yellowstone River data (Park County) with the DTM generated datasets (Springdale downstream)**. This task will incorporate the various categories of flowlines (primary, secondary, anabranch, overflow) generated by the work on the upper river with the dataset generated for the rest of the river by the 2005 DTM, Inc. contract. This is intended as an ongoing effort to incorporate the results of the technical studies in Park County.

2. **Digitize a Primary Channel centerline from the geo-referenced GLO maps.** Primary channel centerline (trace) is the flowline category that represents the main channel. This task involves digitizing the primary channel centerline from the existing Government Land Office maps that were geo-referenced as part of the earlier Geomorphology Reconnaissance Investigation. This is the earliest information available regarding channel position. It is an approximation, but may be useful in detecting significant channel shifts in the last 100 or so years.

3. **Prepare linear referencing indices for each resulting Primary Channel trace (5 total).** Also known as a river mile index, this work develops an index for each primary centerline trace such that any point or segment of the river can be identified by the starting point (i.e., mile marker zero at the Mo River confluence) and the distance from the starting point. Data can then be organized according to its position along the river mile index. Individual scopes of work such as the geomorphology, avian, and riparian vegetation efforts will be required to attribute their data using the appropriate river mile index.

4. **Adjust existing study reach boundaries to better integrate information from the complete dataset.** The existing study reach boundaries will be reviewed and adjusted to better correspond to the flow lines from all years. This will involve minor adjustments of existing channel type boundaries in order to ensure accurate measurement of planform parameters in Task 5.

5. **Summarize geomorphic parameters by study reach. Refine valley centerline.** This is the channel change detection effort and the first step towards detecting historical trends in channel morphology and potential changes resulting from cumulative effects. The GIS will measure and calculate changes in channel length, braiding parameter (total channel length/main channel length), and channel complexity index (sinuosity)(1+number of flowline junctions) by study segment for each of the historic datasets (1950, 1976, 1995, 2001).

6. **Summarize channel displacement parameters for each study reach.** This work will identify segments of significant channel displacement by measuring the size of the polygons formed by the intersection of the 1950 and 2001 primary channel flowlines. The results will be normalized to amount of polygon area per unit length of channel (mile or kilometer) and tabulated according to study segment. The idea is to document where certain reaches of the river exhibit a greater propensity to migrate laterally than others. This is a precursor to understanding why channel segments exhibit this tendency and where we can expect them to migrate next.

7. **Write report.** Self explanatory. This task involves documenting the methodology used, portraying the results so that useful information can be extracted, and providing an assessment of error or uncertainty associated with the results. As data is collected and analyzed, error can enter from a number of sources. We need to be explicit in revealing what this information can and can't tell us.